Chapter Two

The educational binds of poverty

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one outlined the policy discourses concerning families and especially young people in poverty, which have characterized government policy and rhetoric over the last two decades. It was argued that such discourses reflect an increasing emphasis towards the Moral Underclass Discourse, or MUD, which seeks to explain poverty and its effects as the result of moral failings on the part of children and their families. This chapter aims to challenge that view using systematic research to present a very different account of life in poverty for children; one that views children as the victims, albeit not passive ones, of their circumstances, and explores the effects of children's attempts to navigate a set of complex challenges, or binds, in their experiences of school life.

The chapter posits the concept of the 'bind'[1] in order to explain the schooling experiences of children in poverty. The 'bind' refers to a barrier that children experiencing poverty have

[1] Gregory Bateson et al. (1956) first proposed the 'double-bind' to describe the situation for children caught in a continuing dynamic of mediating conflicting messages from their parent(s) in which it is impossible to provide a satisfactory response for the domineering party, engendering a sense of powerlessness and lack of control. Over fifty years later psychologist Stephen Hinshaw (2009) appropriated the double-bind theory to describe the pressures affecting contemporary Western girls and young women, in what he calls, not a double, but a triple bind. He claims that pressures emerge not only from within the family but also within Western society itself, which explains the increasing range of mental illnesses apparent in the West, including depression, low self-esteem, and eating disorders. The specific triple bind Hinshaw identifies concerns conflicting social pressures; those necessary to to be liked (empathy, obedience, helpfulness, nurture); the performative ideals necessary to be admired (success in school, sport and work); and lastly, the narrow set of social standards (concerning appearance and attractiveness) by which to be desired (3). Both these theories conceive of the 'bind' as a set of values and expectations embedded through the institutions of the family, school, community, and (new) media. I am advancing a conceptual lens which treats the 'bind' not as an expectation or set of values per se, but rather as a mediator of children's schooling values and expectations. I retain its sense of imposition whereby there is little space for resistance and little chance of success.

to negotiate in order to achieve educational success. It is an external constraint that places structural limitations on children's actions and motivations in school. The 'bind' metaphor evokes an encumbrance upon the individual, such that there is very little room for leverage. Children may, or may not recognize a 'bind' as an obstruction to educational success, however, they are aware of the consequences for social inclusion. The pervasive force of the bind is in thwarting the child's opportunities to feel a valued learner in school, and interrupting the sense of inclusion that leads to educational success. This is not to say that children are unable to exert agency in striving to be included, but rather that their choices are limited by competing demands, such that the trade-offs inevitably impact upon their educational opportunities and life chances. It was argued in chapter one that MUD discourses attribute educational failure to the actions of the individual, as a result of irrational or poor choices. The bind theory emphasizes the rationality of children's actions in school as a process of day-to-day 'getting by', but, as we shall see, to get by is not the same as 'getting ahead'.[2]

There are four binds advanced in this chapter, selected because of their explanatory power in theorizing educational under-achievement for children in poverty. This is not to suggest that these four binds are exhaustive, but rather, that they are arguably among the most pervasive for children in contemporary Britain. The first bind concerns the material penalties of living in poverty and the consequences of material deprivation in excluding children from and within school. The second bind addresses the difficulties that children in poverty encounter in school, which can seem alien to them. This is especially so, if we consider the dominant forms of middle class cultural capital with which schools connect

[2] Wolf, Lennox and Cutler (1986) have argued according to socioanalytic theory that the forms of self presentation required to 'get along'; acceptance, approval, popularity, are incompatible with those required to get ahead; power, control and status. Whereas the former concerns the approval of others, the second requires is orientated more actively towards personal gain (356).

and foster. Many of the schooling ethnographies of working class students have centred on the challenges emerging from the cultural clash between school and home. The third bind expounds the social capital penalties for children in poverty. Here there are two related points to be made. The first signals the role of friendship in school life. While government policy has focused entirely on success in a range of tests, the schooling lives of children are much broader and richer such that children's day-to-day lives may be motivated more towards acceptance and inclusion. The second point concerns the implication of friendship in the formation of social capital, in whether friendships can be helpful in achieving educationally or, indeed, the opposite. The fourth and final bind considers the effects of student mobility through atypical school changes, which can affect friendship, learning orientations and educational achievement. Student mobility now affects some 40 per cent of primary school children in England (Goldstein, Burgess and McConnell 2007), many of whom experience poverty. While the four binds discussed in this chapter are discrete, there are clear lines of interconnection, centrally premised on the positioning of children as alien or outsiders in school. The four binds presented in this chapter reflect a theoretical framework by which to analyse and understand the lives of children in poverty in the UK.

BIND 1: MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AND ITS ROLE IN EXCLUSION

While many of us may understand the anxieties and limiting effects of financial hardship upon daily life, Millar and Ridge (2001) provide a systematic set of insights into the effects of material deprivation, through their comprehensive review of the literature on lone parents and low-income couple families with children. Their research shows that despite the different approaches that families may take, there is little evidence to suggest that poor families willfully mis-manage their money, but rather that the associated consequences of poverty including; debt, re-constituting family, and the ongoing nature of the poverty cycle,

'place a heavy burden on families' capacities to manage' (Millar and Ridge 2001:73). This is supported elsewhere (Berthoud and Kempson 1992: Kempson et al. 1994; Morris and Ritchie 1994).

Research into the material penalties of living in poverty within Britain points to the associated pressures placed upon families, in significantly constraining children's life chances. This has highlighted the impact on basic necessities: health and social and emotional well-being. Millar and Ridge's (2001) findings elucidate the key areas of family life affected by poverty: likelihood to experience health problems, unsatisfactory housing, poor diet, unemployment, financial and social exclusion, and debt. Duration of time in poverty has been found to mediate these experiences, in affecting people's capacities to pay bills and adapt to changes of circumstances including redundancy, divorce and illness (Rowlingson and Kempson 1993).

Many of the issues associated with poverty can become concentrated within disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that living within an impoverished community has a multiplier effect upon the individual experience. For example, Lupton (2003) has cited the poor service provision and stigma due to fear about anti-social behaviour and crime experienced by residents in the most deprived neighbourhoods of England and Wales. Neighbourhood is also an important mediator in children's access to good quality schooling. Since the introduction of parental choice within the 1988 Educational Reform Act, low-income families have become more vulnerable to the effects of polarized pupil intakes. In their discussion of 'circuits of schooling' Ball et al. (2001) have showed how for low-income families, practical factors such as space, travel and family organization play a key role in parents' decision-making processes over school choice. Middle class parents' decisions, on

the other hand, were informed by what is ideal and advantageous for their children, on account of school history, reputation and performance. The result is that while families within middle class neighbourhoods have privileged access to circuits of high quality, often selective entry state schools, children living in impoverished neighbourhoods can only access circuits of schools with homogenous low socio-economic pupil compositions and high levels of deprivation. Given the process implications of managing behaviour, attendance, and providing for additional needs and welfare roles, schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are likely to provide a lower quality education, even where good management systems are in place (Lupton 2007: 670).

If the material necessities conducive to well being and happiness are so compromised, it takes little imagination to consider how poor health, poor housing, and fear and anxiety over unemployment, crime, and family income may impact upon children's approach to school. To consider these effects in more detail, it is necessary to turn to the experiences and voices of children in schools.

Ridge's (2002) work into the perspectives of children in poverty is important for understanding how children perceive and respond to the conditions outlined above. She highlights the distinctive experience of poverty within an affluent nation and its attendant consumer culture, in observing that just as in adulthood, certain commodities represent a means of communication between young people and are essential to ensure social participation (Willis et al. 1990). Money was found to be important for children, not only in relation to possessions such as clothes and music, but also for the experiential value of taking part in school outings and visits to the cinema, shopping or leisure centre. In lacking the commodities of their friends, children in low income families perceived themselves to

be excluded from their peers, and where leisure clothes and school uniforms were outdated or worn, this even led to teasing and bullying. For some children, forgoing material possessions was of secondary importance to the out-of-school, and sometimes in- school experiences (in the form of school trips) from which they were often excluded, and which formed a large part of in-school conversation. In reflecting on the significance of missing the school day trip to France two years earlier, Amy's account reveals the enduring effects of material exclusion: 'even now my friends bring it up and I'm like, "Oh I didn't go, I can't talk about it'" (Ridge 2002: 76).

Social exclusion for children in poverty has been found to extend to children's relationships with teachers leading them to feel less valued in school (Ridge 2002; Sutton et al 2007). While the affluent children of Sutton et al.'s (2007) study were very positive about school, those in poverty found school to be boring and irrelevant to their lives, and felt less respected and liked by teachers due to their extensive disciplining (19) and coercive control (20). They complained of being: 'often shouted at for not knowing what they were supposed to do' (21) and of not feeling heard: 'It's unfair for us because we have to just listen to teachers all the time' (G1 in Sutton et al. 2007: 21).

As the children in Ridge's (2002) study received little or no pocket money, many of them undertook paid employment, and found this to contribute towards their independence. While many young people have some form of paid employment, research suggests that those from low income families tend to work more than their more affluent peers, either through putting in longer hours, or for holding down more than one job (Middleton et al. 1994). Furthermore, for some children, the income generated through their own work was

found to make a small but significant contribution to the household income (O'Donnell and White 1998).

The issue of paid employment is important in relation to school success when we consider the data on truanting. In her analysis of the (1997) British Household Panel Youth Survey (BHPYS), Ridge (2002) consulted data on consistent truanting, in finding that 11% of children in benefit households were more likely to truant compared with 4% in non-benefit households. One hypothesis for this is that children in poverty may elect to miss school in order to undertake paid employment. This may explain the finding that: 'Children and young people working were nearly twice as likely as non-working children and young people to truant' (Ridge 2002: 116). Considering the importance to their families' finances of missing school in order to work, that children in poverty may choose to do so is hardly surprising.

More recent research into persistent truanting revealed that children in poverty may miss school on account of familial responsibilities or peer pressure. A national study of school absence by the Rathbone charity (2012) found that nearly a quarter of children persistently truanted to care for an ill relative. This is supported by earlier research that uncovered other family demands such as: helping looking after a younger sibling, helping with housework, and waiting for a service-person (e.g. plumber, electrician) in the absence of parents (Hallam and Roaf 1995). Other social concerns were found to play a significant role in children's decisions to truant from school: Almost 30 per cent were bullied so severely they were too scared to return to school; and 46 per cent of respondents had been

'badgered' into skipping school by their peers[3]. These figures explain truanting not as an anti-educational, and rebellious choice, but rather as a rational response to a high stress situation in which the truant could exert limited autonomy. Significantly, the study also found that: 'for 68% of truants, plans to fine or sanction parents when their children missed class were no deterrent at all' [4]. These findings reflect the constraints to inclusion that influence children's decisions to truant, which hardly suggest an apathetic disregard for school or learning, on the part of children or their parents. Such research into the impact of material deprivation provides a sharp contrast to policy responses such as the fines for parents whose children truant, in which the 'solution' rests upon further penalizing families (see chapter one) .

This discussion has outlined the material penalties associated with poverty, which may compromise children's potential to succeed in school. This includes the pressure of financial stress upon the home, and the associated responsibilities for children, leading to a sense of 'growing up faster' than their peers (Foster et al. 2008). It also extends outside of the home, in living within communities suffering similar pressures and anxiety. We can therefore understand material deprivation to impact in varying ways upon children's access to quality schooling, in relation to the type of school accessible, factors compromising attendance, and once inside school, the opportunities for inclusion. However, as Gale (2011) has argued, social justice in education is not simply an issue of access to quality education. The next section explores the processes within school, which may impact upon the differential experiences for children in poverty from their more advantaged peers,

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[3] This study has been archived but is available on: (http://archive-org.com/page/634030/2012-11-12/http://www.rathboneuk.org/newsarticle.aspx?ID=691)
[Accessed 26 June 2014]
[4] Ibid

understood through the notion of under-class cultures and the ways that schools respond to these.

BIND 2: THE ALIEN CULTURE OF SCHOOLING

To speak of the culture of schooling as alien for children (and their families) in poverty, asserts that the aspiration to achieve educational success should not be equated with the opportunity to realize it (Mcloed 2009). As discussed in chapter one, the MUD conception attributes blame to the low aspirations of families in poverty, in explaining why children are not successful in school. It is worth noting at the outset that this assumption is not born out by the evidence. Kempson's (1996) meta-analysis of 31 qualitative studies into the effects of poverty, found that families in poverty had the same aspirations as others in society: 'they want a job; a decent home, and an income that is enough to pay the bills with a little to spare.' (4). However, she also observed that due to the material consequences brought about by social and economic changes, low income families were highly uncertain about achieving these aspirations and: 'felt deeply pessimistic regarding their own children's futures' (5). More recently, research into the Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE) 3-14 study in England (2007-2011), found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds shared generally the same high aspirations for higher education as their more affluent peers (Baker et al. 2014). This was despite such aspirations being: 'unlikely to be realized, given existing patterns of continuation rates to higher education and their [children's] levels of educational achievement' (20). If the importance of educational success is recognized as much for those in poverty as for middle-class families, how might the culture of schooling be implicated in understanding parents' vastly different perceptions as to whether schooling will lead to educational success for their children?

One way of understanding the cultural bind confronting children in poverty concerns the processes of *educational* and *cultural* differentiation (Brown 1987). Educational differentiation refers to the difficulties that students in poverty confront when engaging with academic disciplines and the knowledge that they can provide. There has been a major debate concerning this issue (Bourdieu 1974, 1977; Young 2007). Cultural differentiation is intimately connected to disciplinary knowledge, because the cultural modalities in which disciplinary knowledge is taught are middle class. Michael Young (2009) has captured the distinction between the educational and the cultural as that of between powerful knowledge and knowledge of the powerful. Whereas knowledge of the powerful refers to, 'who defines "what counts as knowledge" and has access to it' (13), powerful knowledge refers to: 'what the knowledge can do – for example, whether it provides reliable explanations or new ways of thinking about the world' (14). Young's argument is that powerful or disciplinary knowledge is essential for all students and particularly those that are considered disadvantaged.

However, it is much more difficult, in practice, to divorce powerful knowledge from the knowledge of the powerful because as Bourdieu (1974) has argued, knowledge and its associated pedagogy is intimately bound up with the culture and the lives of school children of the dominant class. He encapsulates this idea in the notion of cultural capital, in which the culture of the homes of middle class families, including the books they read, their leisure activities, consumption of culture, and their conversations, are consistent with the culture of the school.

Anette Lareau (2000) has looked at how this account ties in with the everyday lives of middle and working class students, especially in relation to their leisure activities. The middle class children in Lareau's study could be seen to engage in adult organized activities, which honed their interpersonal skills and confidence, and enabled them to leverage an advantage in relation to school:

> [Middle class children] spent a lot of time greeting a wide range of other adults, learning to look people in the eye and shake their hands. They spent a great deal of time 'performing' in situations similar to school; as for example, at soccer practice, they lined up, followed directions, performed tasks upon the request of adults and demonstrated their skill in a public setting (168).

It is possible to see, from this account, how for middle class children, out of school activities translate into dispositions that can lead to school success. Their easy relationships with adults can be applied equally to relationships with teachers. By the same token, schoolwork often involves performing in a public setting in the way they are familiar with. The leisure pursuits of working class children, however, lacked such opportunities: 'Once home they settled into a flow of activities more under their control, such as television watching, eating snacks, riding bikes, or playing with friends outside' (165). This example illustrates some of the ways in which the lived experience of middle class children connect with the cultural expectations of school, preparing them for the performative ideals underpinning school success. In contrast, the more solitary and unstructured nature of working class children's leisure activities have less resonance with the types of activities that children are expected to engage in in school.

Bourdieu's position can be summed up in his (1977) account of symbolic violence: The process of naturalizing dominant symbolic systems into popular culture, through the domination of one cultural group over another. Within school this refers to the marginalization of the cultural values of the working classes, and especially those in poverty, with respect to the dominant values of the school. Symbolic violence can be used to explain the school's role in translating cultural capital into a hierarchy of success, and failure in terms of individual capability. In this way, children and their parents are held accountable for their own cultural disadvantage:

> The culture of the elite is so near to that of the school that children from the lower middle [and working] class can only acquire with great effort something which is given to the children of the cultivated classes- style, taste, wit- in short those attributes which seem natural in members of the cultivated classes and naturally expected from them precisely because...they are the culture of that class...Poor achievement for some groups [and success for others] in a society then, is not something inherent in cultural difference per se, but is an artifact of the way schools operate. Those with the appropriate cultural capital are reinforced with 'success' while others are not.
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> (Harker 1990: 87)

In considering the operation of symbolic violence it is helpful to turn to the work of one of the most influential sociologists of education, Basil Bernstein, whose analyses of pedagogy and social class, provide a complementary account of why school may be perceived as alien for children in poverty. Of key importance here is the significance Bernstein (1966) attributes to the highly differentiated linguistic registers of middle, versus working class children. Children from middle class backgrounds are likely to be exposed to what Bernstein calls an 'elaborated' code of speech. Through engaging in in-depth linguistic

interaction in the home and community (e.g. in the description and explanation afforded to child questioning) they will be more likely to develop an expansive linguistic register. Working class children, in contrast, are more likely to be exposed to a 'restricted' code of speech, where dialogue in the home and community is less verbose and more perfunctory. Because schools employ a linguistic register more in line with the elaborated codes of middle class children, the form and nature of language within school is one way in which children in poverty are less favourably disposed to schooling pedagogies.

While the notion of symbolic violence accounts for the way that students are ranked in ways that are ultimately rigged by social class (Brown 2000) New Labour and Coalition governments have both expected teachers to perform the 'miracle' of equalizing the life chances of students in poverty through a combination of the state theory of learning, and an inspection regime which many teachers consider to be a form of hectoring and bullying (see chapter one). While this approach and its consequences dominate public debate, educational researchers have engaged in two approaches to identify and address what has been an intractable problem. The first has reflected on how and under what policy conditions progressive pedagogies may engage working class students. For example, Whitty (2012) has examined various pedagogical approaches that may create engagement. The second has documented the ways that performative pedagogies, consistent with the demands of the state theory of learning, create passive and conforming learners in working class schools (Hempel-Jorgensen 2009). While these qualities might be considered desirable to control working class students (as suggested by the employment of ex- service personnel in schools), they are not the learning orientations required to be academically successful.

To consider the culture of schooling as alien merits consideration of the reasons as to why, and in what ways, schooling pedagogies are alienating for children in poverty. In order to consider how students mediate and negotiate between the cultures of their lives in and out of school, and respond to the material challenges poverty may impose, it is helpful to consider the role of the peer group. It may be that friendships offer a way of countering the excluding effects of symbolic violence and material hardship, in creating solidarity, and at times resistance, in school. By attending to the role of friendships we may come to better understand the responses of children in poverty, beyond that of a simple resist/conform duality. Underlying the following discussion of friendship is the insight that dominance relations, of the kind described by Bourdieu (1977), often entail the fragmentation of relationships amongst the dominated, and this can be true of the friendships that those in poverty form.

BIND 3: SCHOOL FRIENDSHIPS & THEIR IMPLICATION IN LEARNING

The claim that friendship can pose a bind against educational achievement does not undermine its fundamental role in rendering meaningful the daily school lives of children. Friendship has been shown to enable assimilation into the school community (Schwarz 1972; Ispa 1981), greater well-being and pro-school attitudes (Ladd and Kochenderfer 1996; Wentzel, Barry and Caldwell 2004) as well as academic achievement (Berndt and Keefe 1995; Wentzel and Caldwell 1997). However, the question of how friendships can be understood to lead to such gains, has been explained through their implication in the formation of social capital (Brown 2012). The ways in which friendship can be converted into the social capital for academic success include: 'support with classwork, keeping in contact over the phone to discuss homework and...helping with revision' (Demetriou et al. 2000: 437). Within the peer group, individual children may be seen as a resource because

they are knowledgeable in a particular area, or some may act as intermediaries between teachers and their friends. Alternatively, friendship groups may also obstruct learning through peer group pressure to conform to anti-education behaviour (Demetriou et al. 2000; Galton et al. 1999).

In order to consider how some friendships may lead to an educational advantage while others may not, it is necessary to consider the role of friendship cultures. Research into peer cultures has highlighted the forms and functions of friendship as different for boys and girls, both within socio-psychological perspectives (Rubin 1980; Asher and Gottman 1981; Smilansky 1991) as well as in the feminist literature (Spender and Sarah 1980; Mahony 1985). While boys' friendships operate in the public spheres of the classroom, street and playground (Sherriff 2007) girls' friendships are more often connected to the altogether more private spheres of social life (Johnson and Aries 1983; O'Connor 1992). While this may make them less visible within the classroom, it does not mean that friendships are less significant for girls. It may, however, explain why girls were for a long while overlooked by researchers. Recognition of such differences calls for a branching off in the mapping of the ethnographic research, between those interested in boys' and girls' friendships.

The public worlds of boys' friendships

Willis' (1977) seminal study raised the cultural importance of working class boys' dis-engagement with school. His analyses distinguished between the school resisters (what he termed the 'lads') and those that went along with the demands of the school (the 'earoles'). The 'lads' did not engage with schooling but sought rather to 'have a laugh'. They effectively 'bounced off' the school because it was not relevant to their future plans for

manual work. In turn, the 'lads' identities as future manual workers were bound up with sexism and racism.[5] Willis' work heralded a series of illuminating ethnographic studies into how some working class boys respond to the issues of symbolic violence through resistance (Walker 1988; Connell 1989; Mac an Ghail 1994). This literature has shed light upon the importance of the social group in constructing collective identities that shape boys' orientations to work and education. Not all ethnographic studies found working class youth resisting, others such as Brown (1987) found that (as with the 'earoles' in Willis' study) many 'ordinary kids' went along with the demands of the school, even if they saw no real point in them. In other words, anti-school sub-cultures were only one of a number of sub-cultures that working class youth utilized as a resource in responding to symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977).

Walker's (1988) five year study into boys' friendship groups within an Australian working class urban school, followed four groups of boys: the 'footballers', 'the Greeks', the 'hand-ballers' and the 'three friends' across the different sites of school, as well as public spaces such as the street, discos and sports grounds. Unlike many other sub-cultural ethnographies, Walker was interested in the most dominant of the groups (the 'footballers') for whom the shared activity and culture of sport and racist, sexist and homophobic discourses played a key function in the shaping of their identities as 'true' or 'real' 'Aussies'. Walker's study was significant in exposing the ways in which hegemonic forms of class, ethnicity and sexuality operate so as to oppress and subordinate minority friendship forms. This highlighted the performative element of dominant male friendship groups, and how the domination and contestation of space in the classroom and playground through 'having a laugh', is one way in which boys assert power in school.

[5] Women played a role in Willis' ethnography but only as objects of the 'lads'' desires.

In starting to unpack the role of social group identities for boys, it is necessary to shift attention towards the role and interplay of different boys' friendship groups in school. The literature on boys' friendships has frequently resulted in typographies of friendship groups. These included: the hard-workers; 'ear-oles' (Willis 1977) 'Cyrils' (Kessler et al. 1985), 'swots' (Connell 1989) and 'academic achievers' (Mac an Ghail 1994); the sporty and popular: 'bloods' (Kessler et al. 1985) 'footballers' (Walker 1988) 'Cool guys' (Connell 1989) and 'Macho lads' (Mac an Ghail, 1994); and lastly, the unpopular non-conformers; 'Lads' (Willis 1977) 'three friends' (Walker 1988) and 'Wimps' (Connell 1989). Such labels are important according Sherriff (2007) as boys' behaviour must be read as an identity making performance in order to affirm peer group membership. He suggests that the more secure the individual's identification with the peer group, the stronger his sense of self-worth. A critical aspect of this performance is in reinforcing the value of one's own group through the devaluation of those outside of the friendship group. This might involve private, but especially public, taunting, teasing and denouncement of another group. Here we may understand how the processes of recognition of peer group status, are exclusionary. The individual must demonstrate to those internal to, as well as external to the peer group, his own right to inclusive status, and other peers' status as non-deserving. There is no status in being part of a group that anyone can join freely! This suggests that inclusion within the social group also results in, or even requires, the exclusion of others. Peer group to peer group devaluation is a notable feature of other ethnographic research into boys' friendship groups (Willis 1977; Brown 1987; Pollard 1987). It also helps explain why social groups may conform to the expectations of the school if they are successful in these terms, while those less academically successful may publicly reject them in order to

reinforce the social group identity as in opposition to the values and expectations of school success.

The private worlds of girls' friendships

As one of the first in depth studies into girls' friendships in school, The Harvard project was significant in attending to the confident voices of girls as moral agents within schooling systems that try to control and silence them (Gilligan 1982; Brown and Gilligan 1992). This work uncovered the ways in which some girls voices are dominated by more powerful others, and in showing how gendered discourses may legitimize this. However, it has since been argued that in implicating other women as the main perpetrators in the oppression of adolescent girls, this work over simplified the inequalities between girls, and the ways in which they wield power over each other (Hey 1997: 10).

Studying the dynamics involved in girls' social groups is a lot harder given the altogether more private world of girls' friendships, which are often performed outside of the public gaze of the classroom, the street and the playground, in favour of the hidden spaces of the corridors, cloakrooms and bedrooms. Due to the private and intimate nature of girls' friendships, it might be argued that processes of inclusion and exclusion are more formative in shaping girls' experiences *within* the friendship group as opposed to between groups (in the case of boys). This may explain why researchers have been more interested in considering the internal dynamics of girls' friendship groups (Nilan 1991; Quick and Winter 1995, George and Browne 2001).

A sensitive exploration into the private lives of girls' friendships in secondary school can be seen in Valerie Hey's (1997) study, which uncovers themes of intimacy, secrecy and the

struggle for acceptance. Hey's research underlines the significant work involved in the daily survival of navigating school. In taking account of the classed, gendered, but also ethicized nature of girls friendship groups, Hey's work highlighted the ways in which girl's friendships are implicated in the production of cultural hegemony. Through illuminating the inflections of these categories upon the values and social identities of friendship groups, Hey considered the variation in friendship groups lacking in power. Attending to such differences enabled her to reflect upon the tensions evident in consolidating the competing perceived expectations of boys, with an embedded sense of social reputations: 'how to be "lovely (and) gorgeous" without being "slaggy", how to be provocative without "doing it" and how to turn boys on "but not get carried away"'(84).

Limitations upon the opportunities for empowering female friendship identities were also explored in Diane Reay's (2001) work, in discussing the variant, albeit limited, versions of femininity found within one primary classroom. Friendship groupings were positioned within a hierarchy of popularity and validation by which girls, boys and their teachers generally concurred. Reay discussed the social and cultural resources by which girls negotiated discourses of femininities and masculinities, in constructing conforming, as well as transgressive, gendered identities: 'But this is not to suggest that these children have myriad choices of which variant of femininity and masculinity to assume. They do not. Class, ethnicity and emergent sexualities all play their part, and constrain as well as create options' (163). Whereas the friendship groups more closely aligned with conventional notions of femininity were prone to denigration within the wider peer group, the more accepted friendship groups aspired to reject or subvert such conventional discourses, and were active in carving spaces to resist gender subordination. Nevertheless, this did little to challenge the prevailing gender order that it was in sum, 'better being a boy' (164).

More recent work within the literature of girls' friendship groups has explored the implications for girls in having friendships characterized by more intense emotions in comparison with boys. As discussed in chapter one, recognition of this feature of girls friendships has led attempts in some schools to discourage children from forming close friendships, on account of the distressing nature of fall-outs, and importantly for schools, the impact that this can have upon learning. George's work (2007) concerned the durability of girls' friendship groups and the stability they offer as a secure resource for inclusion within school. She discussed the propensity for girls' friendships to fluctuate and reformulate, particularly upon transition to secondary school, and suggested that the hierarchical formation of their friendship groups are underpinned by dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, which may well have an emotional cost. As a consequence friendship groups frequently shift and inevitably some girls get left on the fringes. Nilan (1991) has argued that such decisions are 'rational', 'considered', and underpinned by a strict moral code: 'The exclusion of a group member was not an arbitrary event, not just a seasonal "weeding-out" of group members, but was a process informed at every stage by moral justifications that all the girls took very seriously (167). This challenges the dominant view that fluctuations within girls' friendships reflect the fickle, bitchy, or malicious nature of girls friendships bonds (Davies 1979). On the contrary, Nilan's work shows the extent to which girls took their friendships seriously, and serious too were the consequences for those who defied the moral order of the friendship group.

In considering the dynamics of girls' friendship groups in relation to learning and teacher judgments, George and Browne's (2000) study is particularly illuminating. Supporting previous work highlighting the importance of moral ordering within girls' friendships

(Nilan 1991; Hey 1997) this study found the status of best-friend(s) to be entrenched within processes of inclusion and exclusion. However, in contrast to Nilan (1991) these processes were constructed not on the basis of mutual trust, but of domination, with the leader exerting emotional power over the other members of the group (see also Quicke and Winter 1995). In explaining this, George and Browne distinguished between the 'inner' circle and 'peripheral' groups, whereby the former were far more secure in the validation of the group, and had greater say in who was in, and who was out. The peripheral groups had, in contrast, far less control over inclusion/exclusion dynamics and were more anxious concerning their group status, particularly in relation to the group leader. More-over a point of significant interest here was that group leaders were among the highest achieving girls within the group, a status that was reinforced by teachers' endorsement of their superior ability. This suggests that low achieving girls may be more vulnerable to social exclusion than low achieving boys within the friendship group.

Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz (2007) have labelled girls' exclusionary in-group behaviours 'meanness' as a regularity function of group membership, and productive of social identities of being 'in' or 'out' of fashion, favour and respect (36). 'Meanness' as a strategy of asserting power in the school setting where pupils have little, is seen by Currie and her colleagues to be less a reflection upon individual girls, and more as a rational response, 'constitutive, rather than maladaptive of dominant culture' (33).

Balancing peer group and teacher expectations

The findings from the friendship literature presented here, suggest that for boys and girls, processes of inclusion and exclusion play a central role in the daily business of navigating school life. Such processes are complex, dynamic and gendered, and further complicated in

relation to school achievement. Both within and between friendship groups we can see that children are variously positioned in the power and autonomy they are able to exert, and in their capacity to mobilize the network for social capital gains. Here the work of Francis, Skelton and Read (2010) is enlightening in uncovering the strategies by which boys and girls negotiate the competing demands of school and sociability, and the success afforded those able to 'balance' these effectively. The focus of their study was upon pupils who were exceptionally high achieving and popular with peers and teachers (HAP), yet despite the importance attributed to school success, findings indicated that all of HAP girls and around half of HAP boys spoke of friendship as the single most important part of school. Students' gendered and ingenious strategies maintained an emphasis upon the social, in presenting achievement as 'effortless' and incidental. Among the girls, strategies included, 'precociousness', emphasizing relative maturity above peers (328), and among the boys, 'clowning' as a gentle and non-aggressive form of classroom confrontation (329). While those socially and academically successful at school may be able to balance competing school pressures, the consequences for those boys and girls who cannot, were evident in a study by Warrington and Younger (2011). They identified the fear, anxiety and above all, loss of self-integrity young people faced in having to sacrifice their ideals or risk exclusion, perhaps most poignantly expressed in the words of one boy: 'being yourself could ruin your life' (163).

This review of research into boys' and girls' social groups has highlighted the altogether different forms and functions of friendship for both genders. Considering the role of friendships in mediating children's aspirations towards, and performances within, school, is helpful in further understanding the tensions apparent between competing expectations of

the peer group and the school, and how these may sit with respect to broader cultural backgrounds.

Ambiguities in orientations to schooling for boys and girls in poverty

The purpose of this review into the dynamics of friendships for children in school is in starting to unpack some of the ambiguities apparent in the orientations to school for children in poverty. If popularity with peers and teachers empowers children within their friendship groups in establishing a secure social standing and confidence to participate in learning activities, then we might expect the opposite to be the case for the children on the fringes of friendship groups. And children in poverty are more likely to be on the periphery of peer groups on account of material deprivation (bind one) and cultural inequalities (bind 2). This enables a more nuanced account of educational failure than if we were to consider any one bind alone. Such ambiguities may be probed further, in understanding the orientations to school for children in poverty in the context of highly mobile lives. This leads on to the fourth and final bind, which considers the effects of irregular school changes upon children's inclusion in school, and how this is affected by children's relationship orientations, as a function of inclusionary as well as exclusionary practices.

BIND 4: THE IMPACT OF 'TURBULENCE' (IRREGULAR SCHOOL MOVES)

The experience of irregular school transitions has been defined in the educational literature as 'turbulence' or more precisely: 'A child joining or leaving school at a point other than the normal age in which children start or finish their education at that school, whether or not this involves a move of home' (Dobson and Henthorne 1999: 5). Following changes to family and labour market structures, welfare reform, the growth in parental preference policies, and a rise in formal exclusions, the number of children who move schools at

irregular times has been increasing since the late 1990s. Turbulence is now a major educational issue in Britain (Dobson and Pooley 2004; Machin, Telhaj and Wilson 2006), as it is in many other countries including the United States (GOA 1994) and New Zealand (Lauder et al. 1994). The concern for educationalists is that the majority of studies undertaken in the United States and Britain suggest that turbulence is associated with an educational penalty for children (Simmons et al. 1987; Ingersoll, Scamman and Eckering 1989; Haveman, Wolfe and Spaulding 1991; Wood et al. 1993; Coleman 1988, 1990; Hagan et al. 1996, Pribesh and Downey 1999; Goldstein, Burgess and McConnell 2007). While there are a number of groups of children who change schools at irregular times, including Travellers, the military, what Knowles (2003) refers to as lifestyle migrants (families who elect to move for reasons of social mobility) by far the largest turbulent group are children in poverty, e.g. asylum seekers, refugees, those living in temporary social housing, those escaping domestic abuse and those in families who move to avoid debt. Not only are children experiencing turbulence increasingly likely to be from low-income families, but the negative impact upon educational achievement has been found to be cumulative with each subsequent move (RSA 2013: 5). For this reason it is important to consider turbulence as a further bind upon children in poverty.

Those studies that have aimed to theorize the educational penalty for children experiencing turbulence, have appropriated social capital theory (Coleman 1988; Pribesh and Downey 1999; Hagan, McMillan and Wheeton 2001). Using Coleman's (1988) definition, these studies have emphasized the significance and inter-connection for the child, of the relationship between the family, the community and school. This is because social connections between child and adult in different contexts: 'can provide the child with support and rewards from additional adults that reinforce those received from the first, and

can bring about norms and sanctions that could not be instituted by a single adult alone' (Coleman 1990: 593). Coleman (1988) found that following irregular school transition pupils were more likely to drop out of high school, arguing that it is the disruption caused by turbulence to family and community social capital that explains the educational penalty. Following relocation, relationships between the child and significant role models in the community (including extended family) are broken, while family relationships are put under strain, resulting in a rupture in the transmission of pro-schooling values to the child in different social contexts. As an additional pressure upon family life, relocation itself can alienate both the child and their family in the school and community. This may be compounded by the particular context, such as redundancy, illness or family break-up, in which the move takes place. Given the familial stressors, it takes little imagination to consider why the child's application to schoolwork may be dampened.

Coleman's focus, however, was on the parents and the way they constructed community social capital on behalf of the children. Pribesh and Downey (1999) later developed Coleman's theory in situating the child as an independent purveyor of social capital in their own right. By considering the social networks of the child, these authors identified a more profound educational penalty for school and home moves, than either one of these taken in isolation.

The most recent work on turbulence has sought to explain the findings of large quantitative studies through exploring qualitatively the ways in which social capital might operate in school through children's friendships, and, how 'turbulent' children's friendship orientations may mediate inclusion/exclusion processes (Brown 2012). In comparing children's friendship orientations with those of their peers who had never moved schools

and locations, children experiencing turbulence could be seen to lack trust in four key areas, including; confidentiality, honouring promises, endurance following arguments, and reciprocity of trust (232). Furthermore, absence of trust was explained through the effects of severed significant relationships such as grief and loss due to weakened access to friends, family, neighbours, teachers, and community role models (230-31).

UNPACKING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY

In reflecting on the four binds presented in this chapter it is pertinent to conclude in considering potential lines of interconnection. While the experiences of children in poverty may well be mediated by the cultural, political, and social contexts in which children live, there may be commonalities in the ways that poverty impacts on children's social relationships, which may shape their orientations towards school and learning. The social and economic worlds have changed over the period since Willis' (1977) seminal study, and here there are two points to be made. Firstly, children continue in their struggle to negotiate the cultural realm of the knowledge of the powerful. Secondly, it is in the nature of ethnographic studies that they are situated in a specific time and place, and that while the binds that children encounter in negotiating middle class schooling may or may not be changing, the meanings, concerns and relationships that help them to navigate these binds will also change.

The following chapters consider the stories of six children in poverty, in discussing the unique ways in which they negotiated the material, cultural and social binds upon their schooling experiences. The stories focus upon the ways in which children navigate through friendship networks, in considering the centrality of peer inclusion in terms of school life. These stories problematize and develop an account of children's schooling orientations and

aspirations, in highlighting the tensions and ambiguities apparent within their schooling experiences. It should be stressed that it is in the nature of ethnographic work that we cannot locate all the children neatly within all four binds: some will overcome one or more of them, but even then it is important to see how they do it and what penalties they incur.

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